



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



RAPID CITY SOLDIERS WELCOMED HOME AFTER DEPLOYMENT

A welcome home ceremony for four Soldiers of the 1978th Contingency Contracting Team, South Dakota Army National Guard, was held Wednesday at Camp Rapid. Maj. Matthew Symonds, Capt. Paula Moore, Sgt. 1st Class Jack Hahne and Staff Sgt. Amanda Galdo returned home after a nearly 10-month tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit deployed last November.

The mission of the Rapid City-based 1978th was to assist with the development and administration of contracting support plans and policies in support of U.S. and coalition forces throughout Afghanistan. The soldiers ensured contracting officers executed valid, legally enforceable documents, prepared in full compliance with federal procurement regulations and directives.

Speakers for the ceremony included Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, director of the joint staff for the SDNG.

"I want to thank each of you for what you have done, representing our state and our nation," said Daugaard. "I know your work was greatly appreciated by the people you helped, whether coalition forces or the local nationals. You did a fantastic job and welcome home!"

During the unit's deployment, their contracting efforts directly impacted daily life-support services and commodities that are needed for a forward operating base or combat outpost to be functional; such as private security for bases, dining facility operations, construction projects, trash and waste removal, trucking services and heavy equipment rentals and operators. The unit administered contracts ranging between \$9 million and more than \$900 million worth of services and commodities during their deployment. Working out of regional contracting offices throughout eastern and southern Afghanistan, the soldiers were stationed separately at different camps and forward operating bases, and the contracts they oversaw supported tens of thousands of troops.



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GROUNDBREAKING HELD FOR STATE'S NEW VETERANS HOME

Veterans, state and local government leaders, veterans organizations, residents and partners within the veteran network gathered for the ceremonial groundbreaking for the state's new Veterans Home in Hot Springs, S.D. on Wednesday, Sept. 25.

Speakers at the event included Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Lt. Gov. Matt Michels and Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

In his remarks, Gov. Daugaard thanked veterans for their service and those who made the project a reality along with the hundreds more who will build it. The Governor also provided attendees with a history of the Home and recognized the name sake Medal of Honor Recipient Michael J. Fitzmaurice.

"History is full of lessons for current generations...and the lesson here is that persistence and determination for a worthy cause will always, eventually, win," said Lt. Gov. Michels in his



speech. "When it comes to caring for our veterans, South Dakotans will always be persistent and determined to help them."

The newly designed Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veteran's Home will be a 133,000-square-foot stacked two-story building with a lower level walkout main entrance. The 100-bed facility will be used to serve South Dakota veterans and will contain 52 skilled nursing beds on the main level and 48 non-skilled or residential living beds on the upper level. The living spaces will be broken into eight neighborhoods housed in eight wings. Each neighborhood will include a living room, dining room and kitchen area that will provide a home-like environment to the 12-13 occupants housed in each neighborhood. The design incorporates residential type furnishings and finishes, and warm, welcoming colors to reduce the institutional look and give the spaces a more comforting feel. (Continued on next page)

GROUNDBREAKING (CONTINUED)

This new facility will include adequate nursing care, staff offices and support spaces throughout. Residents will have access to physical therapy, speech therapy, fitness, recreational opportunities, workshops and an auditorium. The community space will be located in the center of the building on the main floor and includes a kitchen, cafeteria, postal service, pharmacy, barber shop and community room.

The facility will contain energy efficient heating and cooling systems, low flow-fixtures to reduce water consumption, as well as many windows to bring natural light to the interior spaces. The biomass boiler system will use local wood chips as a fuel source which will reduce the annual fuel cost.

"Today's groundbreaking ceremony is the culmination of nearly a decade of work and effort," said Secretary Zimmerman. "We may only have six shovels and a little dirt here today to work with, but today we're going to begin a renewed commitment to South Dakota's veterans. We are fortunate to have the commitment and support of the Governor, Lt. Governor, congressional delegation, legislators, veterans service organizations, County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and federal, state, county and local elected offi-



cials. It takes a team to make this dream a reality."

For updates on the project, visit the Department's website at <http://www.vetaffairs.sd.gov>



SPINK COUNTY OBSERVES POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Spink County observed the "POW/MIA Recognition Day" on Friday, September 20th. This was the first time the State of South Dakota officially observed the national day. This past spring the SD Legislature enacted the three veteran related "working holidays" and this was the second of the three.

Spink County chose the local park most associated with veterans, the Merle Legler Memorial Park, near the former VFW Hall in downtown Redfield. The day was proclaimed "Lyle Dean Waddington Day" for Spink County's only former POW. Dean served in WWII and is now 98 years old. He was brought to the park by his three nieces.

The program consisted of presenting Dean with the Proclamation by the governor and a Certificate of Appreciation by Secretary Zimmerman. These were presented by Steve Oliva, Veteran Field Officer. Darrell Ronnfeldt, President of the City Council presented the proclamation designating "Dean Waddington Day". Mr. Waddington thanked everyone for coming and said being at the park brought back many memories, because he was the foreman who built the park as part of the Conservation Corps or CC's in 1938.

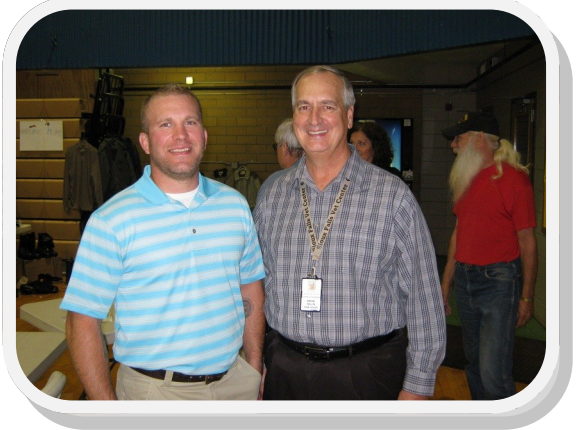
The program also consisted of two songs sung by the Redfield High School All State Chorus. One song was about Arlington Cemetery called "Blades of Grass & Pure White Stones" and the other "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother". It turned out to be a beautiful fall day in Redfield and the park was the place to be.



ABERDEEN VETERANS STAND DOWN

The Aberdeen Veterans Stand Down was held Tuesday, September 24, from 2:00-6:00 PM at the Aberdeen Civic Center at 203 S. Washington. This event was held in conjunction with Aberdeen's 2nd Annual Project Connect.

On-the-spot help included meal, clothing, community housing referrals, social services, medical treatment, readjustment counseling, women veterans health care, VA benefit information, and more. SDDVA Field Officer Steve Oliva and Brown County VSO Aaron Walberg were on hand to answer questions from veterans regarding benefits and services.



SDDVA LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce the launch of its new website. The new site is designed to offer veterans a centralized clearinghouse of valuable resources accessible from anywhere in the world.

In conjunction, the Department has added a mobile website, making it easier for veterans to access information from their smartphones or tablets.

"If we are going to reach out to the new generation of veterans who grew up with computers and the Internet, we have to capitalize on those technologies," said Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Larry Zimmerman. "Our new website is designed to highlight the benefits and programs available to them, as well as provide veterans with a list of experts ready to assist them in maneuvering through their benefits."

An estimated 75,000 veterans live in South Dakota and that number increases as our troops return home each month.

To view the website, visit <http://www.vetaffairs.sd.gov>.



NEW VSO AT BROWN COUNTY

The Brown County Commissioners have hired Aaron Walberg as their new County Veterans Service Officer. Walberg started his duties as CVSO on September 16, 2013, replacing long time Service Officer Tom Gohn.

Aaron is a US Army 101st Airborne Division veteran of the Kosovo Campaign and Operation Iraqi Freedom and is the former Chairman of the Aberdeen Military Veterans Committee.

Aaron resides in Aberdeen with his wife Mandy and his three children Aaron Jr., Russell, Madelyn.



STAND DOWN — SIOUX FALLS

The Sioux Falls annual VA Stand Down was a great opportunity for leaders within the veteran network and the Sioux Falls Community to come together to help veterans in need. The Stand Down, held on Sept. 20, was deemed a great success and afforded community leaders to work together in assisting veterans from that region.

SDDVA Veterans Service Officers Crista Pick and Regina Boeve, along with Minnehaha County Veterans Service Officer Patricia Kroupa, visited with veterans about benefits and services. Ralph Sowder, Veterans Service Technician from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home was on hand to visit with veterans about the State Veterans Home.

“Events like Stand Downs allow us to meet with veterans and their families and inform them of all the services



afforded to them—it’s making that connection,” said Secretary Zimmerman.



LARGE CROWD TAKES ADVANTAGE OF PROJECT CONNECT IN PIERRE

Officials say many different faces were seen for the first time during the fifth annual Project Connect held Tuesday in Pierre.

The program, held at Faith Lutheran Church in Pierre, offered services needed by Pierre-Fort Pierre residents. Several local and state agencies provided information and there were other offered services such as meals, clothing, haircuts, dental care and having family photos taken.

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen was on hand to answer questions for veterans and provide them information on benefits, programs and services.

The day also serves as the official count of homeless people in Pierre. Bondy hopes to have the official number later this week. Last year’s survey found 25 homeless people –17 adults and eight children.



VA CONVENES COMMISSION TO IDENTIFY CANDIDATES FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH POSITION

The Secretary of the Veterans Affairs (VA) is convening a commission to recommend candidates to the President for appointment as the Under Secretary for Health (USH) for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the largest integrated health care system in the country.

Following a 40-year career serving Veterans as a VA physician, teacher, and administrator, Dr. Robert A. Petzel, will retire in 2014 as planned, following a four-year tenure as Under Secretary for Health.

"I am grateful for Dr. Petzel's distinguished service to Veterans spanning four decades, and for his leadership in transforming VHA's health care delivery system to better care for Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Dr. Petzel has assured me that he will continue to serve in his position until the Senate confirms a new Under Secretary for Health, in order to ensure a smooth transition."

The VA is required by law to convene a commission to seek the next Under Secretary for Health. Due to the length of the process, VA is initiating the commission in advance of Dr. Petzel's retirement. As Under Secretary for Health since February 2010, Dr. Petzel has directed a health care system with over 286,000 employees and a medical care budget of \$53.1 billion, overseeing the care of more than 6.3 million Veterans. Dr. Petzel has led VHA's innovative efforts at moving toward a new model of care and pursuing eConnected health, in which VA providers use mobile devices and technology to extend health care beyond traditional visits.

"I have appreciated the privilege to serve Veterans by developing a healthcare system that reaches beyond simple treatment of diseases to a true partnership with Veterans," said Dr. Petzel. "VA will continue to partner with Veteran patients throughout their lives in order to improve their health and well-being."

The commission will be launched this Fall. Suitable candidates to serve as members of this important commission will be selected based upon criteria outlined in the law and their skills, knowledge and attributes as leaders, managers and educators.

VOSIKA HONORED FOR HER COMMITMENT TO SOUTH DAKOTA'S VETERANS

Today SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman had the honor and privilege to present a "Governor's Proclamation to Lori Vosika.

Vosika serves as the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Noble Dawn Program Manager for the Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System.

In proclaiming October 14, 2013, as "Lori Vosika Day in South Dakota," Governor Dugaard recognized Vosika for her unending commitment to South Dakota's veterans and for her outstanding service to this state and county.

"Lori has been a strong advocate for South Dakota's veterans and has conducted numerous outreach programs to reach our veterans," said SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman.



OPEN HOUSE AND VETERANS BENEFITS FAIR

The Sioux Falls VA (Dept. of Veterans Affairs) Health Care System welcomes all veterans and their families to an open house and Veterans Benefits Fair at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center on Oct. 8, 2013. This event will take place at 2501 W. 22nd Street from 4:00-7:00 PM.

A special invitation is extended to veterans who currently do not use VA services. VA staff will explain VA eligibility and health care. In addition, VA Regional Office staff will also be there to discuss compensation benefits, including those for Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange. Health screenings and refreshments will be available. To assist in applying for benefits, Veterans should bring copies of their discharge papers (DD214) and their last income tax Form 1040.

SDDVA Veterans Service Officers Crista Pick and Regina Boeve will be representing the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at this event.

Questions, please call 605-333-6889.



SIoux FALLS VA OFFERS EXTENDED CLINIC HOURS

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System now offers extended hours for Veterans for primary care and mental health appointments.

Primary Care Extended Hours Information

During The Week

- A primary care team now works until 6:30 PM each Tuesday.
- The team working will see patients assigned to them as scheduled appointments. There will be no walk-in appointments.

Weekends

- A primary care team now works every Saturday.
- The team working will see patients assigned to them as scheduled appointments. There will be no walk-in appointments.
- Walk-in patients will go to the Emergency Department during extended hours.
- Extended hours are for scheduled appointments.
- Extended hours will not be available on holiday weekends, e.g., Veterans Day weekend.
- Lab and imaging services are available.

Mental Health Extended Hours Information

- A mental health provider works every Saturday from 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM.
- Mental Health providers have extended hours for scheduled mental health patients until 6:30 PM.

Please contact Jason Vollmer at 605-336-3230, Ext. 6689 for more information.



SD SOLDIERS COMPETE IN STATE'S BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

Thirty-five South Dakota Army National Guard enlisted Soldiers and non-commissioned officers competed in the state's Best Warrior Competition Sept. 19-21 at Camp Rapid. The competition tested the Guardsmen mentally, physically and emotionally through a series of events designed to challenge the toughest of Soldiers. Both men and women competed for the ultimate prize; to be named as either the state's Soldier or Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Some of the events included a written exam, essay writing, battle drills, M-16 rifle marksmanship, land navigation, obstacle course, six-mile road march (carrying a 40-pound pack) and a physical fitness test.

Events began as soon as the participants arrived the first day. As the event lagged late into the night, they were given a written exam and an essay to write, while each Soldier awaited his or her turn to face a formal board. During the board, each competitor's dress uniform was scrutinized while they answered questions asked by a panel of sergeants major. They also had to recite the Soldier's or NCO's creed.

Early the next morning, every competitor was given the Army Physical Fitness Test, which includes push-ups, sit-ups and a two-mile run. After breakfast, the Soldiers and NCOs were moved to the rifle range to conduct a shooting event and to an obstacle course; an event that tested both physical conditioning and determination.

Among the competitors, the "weaver" obstacle was almost unanimously nominated as the hardest on the course; where Soldiers moved over and under a series of parallel wooden beams.

Despite the rigors of the obstacle course, Spc. Daniel Leacraft, of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade of Sioux Falls, was able to complete the circuit in less than five minutes, making him the fastest competitor in the event, which took competitors an average of seven minutes, 18 seconds.

Opinions differed among competitors about the most difficult event of the competition; however many deemed that the road march carrying a 40-pound pack for a six mile stretch of the Mickelson Trail was the most difficult single event.

After three-long days and 12 events, it was two members of Watertown's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion that walked away with top honors from this year's Best Warrior Competition.

Staff Sgt. Sam Schaefer of Watertown was the winner in the NCO category and earned the title of NCO of the Year. Spc. Dalton DeBoer of Clear Lake won in the enlisted category and was named the Soldier of the Year.



SEA OF GOODWILL OVERFLOWS

Some horses train to race in the Kentucky Derby or “wow” audiences in Equestrian shows and rodeos. Some work the ranch; still others give strong, yet quiet, “therapy” to those who need it. While there’s no Kentucky Derby here, all those involved in our local Sea of Goodwill’s Equine Therapy program, believe the effort will create its own wins – one person/family at a time. And now, through the generosity of a Watertown couple, Joy Nelson’s vision for Equine Therapy for military heroes is being launched.

Doug and Lynn Sharp’s love for horses and a passion to proactively help veterans re-entering society, made the decision to support Equine Therapy an easy one. Sharp Toyota of Watertown gave \$10,000 and Toyota corporate matched that for a total donation of \$20,000.

“The Sea of Goodwill is extremely grateful for the gift from Sharp’s and Toyota,” said Jan DeBerg. “Their donation will launch equine therapy for veterans and their families at Joy Ranch. This effort will also provide another valuable option for judges in Codington County’s Veterans Court procedure, in the works as a result of an initiative by the Governor.”

“The caring nature of Watertown, and especially individuals like the Doug and Lynn Sharp, never cease to amaze me. We are honored to be of service to the Sharp’s, Joy Ranch, and Human Services Agency in this project,” said Sea of Goodwill Chairman Michael Cartney, Colonel (ret) USAF.

“The Equine Therapy program fills a crucial need, not just for the veteran, but to help the whole family. And it has the potential to become a national center assisting heroes from across the US.”

Why equine therapy? Why Watertown? “It’s just an idea I had,” said Joy Nelson, Joy Ranch benefactor. “Having done a little research on the vet – horse subject, I decided it was time to get a few key people at the table to try to implement a program. After all, that is why Joy Ranch is here: To help as many people as possible in as many ways as we can.”

“We are laying the groundwork to be able to offer what I think will be a life-changing opportunity for people struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” said Betsy Debertin, co-director of Joy Ranch. “The key is that it is very much partnership focused.”

That partnership, including Watertown’s Sea of Goodwill, Joy Ranch and the Human Service Agency, started last April. Once the partnership was there, another essential key factor is ongoing support, both monetarily and otherwise. Thus far, the local Sea of Goodwill effort has received outstanding support from the Watertown community, and the Equine Therapy extension is no exception.

Equine therapy has shown to have many positive benefits when correctly taught by certified therapists, which Joy Ranch will have two of, said Dr. Chuck Sherman, Human Service Agency CEO, who is serving as a consultant to the local Equine Therapy program. Some of those benefits include: confidence, self-efficacy, self-concept, communication, trust, perspective, decreased isolation, self-acceptance, impulse control, social skills and boundaries. “Equine therapy has shown great promise for people with PTSD. It will be beneficial for anyone with PTSD and others, including children and adolescents with anything from Autism to emotional issues. However, there was a particular interest through Sea of Goodwill to develop this kind of program for a vet who may be having difficulties with post deployment.”



SEA OF GOODWILL OVERFLOWS (CONTINUES)

"The veterans have given us a lot," Sharp concluded. "We believe a little bit of help at the proper time in their lives may go a long way as far as righting their world." I also like the grassroots portion of it. In talking with Jo and Jan, they are hoping this program evolves into a national effort to help veterans.

Cartney agreed wholeheartedly. "We hope to see this program become a national program and we are proud Joy Ranch has taken this on here in Watertown, SD."

Upcoming Events

2013

Sept. 28-29—American Legion Golf Tournament—Webster

Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Oct 4-6—VFW Fall Council Meeting—Oacoma Resort

Oct. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Oct. 8—SFVAHCS Veterans Benefit Fair—Sioux Falls

Oct. 9—Stand Down—White River

Oct. 18—1978th AQ Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Rapid City

Oct. 29—South Dakota's Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa Italian Grille—Pierre—8:00 am

Nov. 18—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am

Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

2014

Jan. 25-26- 235th MP Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Chamberlain

Jan. 31—SD Veterans Council Breakfast with Legislators—6:30 am

Feb. 8- 129th MPAD Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Rapid City

April 5-6- 152nd Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Pierre

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